

2005

# Press Street: a concept for preserving, reintroducing and fostering local history

Brian J. McBride

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, [bmcbril@lsu.edu](mailto:bmcbril@lsu.edu)*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses)



Part of the [Landscape Architecture Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

McBride, Brian J., "Press Street: a concept for preserving, reintroducing and fostering local history" (2005). *LSU Master's Theses*. 2952.  
[https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_theses/2952](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/2952)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Master's Theses by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [gradetd@lsu.edu](mailto:gradetd@lsu.edu).

**PRESS STREET: A CONCEPT FOR  
PRESERVING, REINTRODUCING, AND FOSTERING  
LOCAL HISTORY**

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agriculture and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of  
Landscape Architecture

in

The School of Landscape Architecture

by  
Brian J. McBride  
B.S., Louisiana State University, 1994  
May 2005

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The author would like to recognize a number of people for providing assistance, insight and encouragement during the research and writing of this thesis.

Special thanks to the faculty and staff of the School of Landscape Architecture, especially to Max Conrad, Van Cox and Kevin Risk.

To all without whom I could not have completed this process, especially my parents for their persistence; and my wife, for her continued love and support.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	ii
ABSTRACT.....	v
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Problem Statement .....	1
Background to Project.....	1
Current Proposal .....	4
Objectives .....	7
Methods.....	8
CHAPTER 2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW .....	10
Establishment of New Orleans.....	10
Faubourg Marigny .....	11
Faubourg Washington (Bywater).....	12
Area Industry .....	14
Plessy vs. Ferguson.....	18
The 1900's, The Decline of the Community .....	19
Current Conditions .....	21
Future Outlook.....	22
CHAPTER 3. REVIEW AND CRITIQUE OF CURRENT DESIGN .....	25
Intent .....	25
Critique .....	25
Summary.....	27
CHAPTER 4. SITE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS .....	30
Site Location .....	30
Limits of Design .....	31
Current Land Use.....	32
Adjoining Land Use.....	32
Other Uses.....	32
Existing Utilities .....	37
Traffic Circulation .....	37
General Site Condition.....	38
Existing Vegetation and Landscape.....	39
Soils and Topography .....	44
Weather .....	44
Site Orientation .....	44
Noise .....	44
CHAPTER 5. DESIGN APPROACH .....	46
Developing Connections.....	46
Design Analogy .....	47

CHAPTER 6. PARK DESIGN .....	49
Design Concept.....	49
Incorporating Historical Elements .....	49
Streetscape, Site Furniture and Lighting.....	54
Hardscape.....	57
Commemorations .....	57
Park Signage .....	59
Architecture.....	59
Art and Sculpture .....	62
Landscape .....	65
Recreation .....	65
CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION.....	67
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	69
VITA .....	72

## **ABSTRACT**

To encourage increased stability in declining neighborhoods, government planning agencies and other land developers, continuously search for solutions to improve the quality of life for people living in communities in need of revitalization and a boost to their local economy.

Studies have shown that well developed greenways and other public open spaces are improving the economic stability for many neighborhoods. Consequently, it is the creation of successful parks and public open spaces that have been found to be the first steps to improving such communities (The Trust for Public Land).

If creating parks is the key to saving neighborhoods, can a park's design features increase its chances for success, while acting as a catalyst in the movement toward revitalization?

Currently in New Orleans, Marigny and Bywater have been targeted as sources of opportunity to test this theory by taking steps to improve their communities through the development of additional public open spaces.

Parkway Partners and the Trust for Public Land are negotiating the purchase of a six-block tract of railroad corridor that bisects Bywater near the eastern boundary of Marigny. Their specific objective is to develop a linear park in partnership with the New Orleans Department of Parks and Parkways. Parkway Partners hopes that developing a park will improve the quality of life for the residents and initiate improvements for Marigny and Bywater (Parkway Partners).

The intent of this thesis is to develop a new park design for the linear park to be developed along the Press Street corridor. The primary objective is to stimulate improvements within these communities by providing design ideas that have utilized history as the source of inspiration in the development of a park. These design ideas forges distinct historical and cultural links that the community can recognize.

No one can truly predict what type of design elements will make a park successful. However, this project does offer creative ideas that could be used to improve that possibility.

## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

To encourage increased stability in declining neighborhoods, government planning agencies and other land developers, continuously search for solutions to improve the quality of life for people living in communities in need of revitalization and a boost to their local economy.

Studies have shown that well developed greenways and other public open spaces are improving the economic stability for many neighborhoods. Consequently, it is the creation of successful parks and public open spaces that have been found to be the first steps to improving such communities (The Trust for Public Land).

### **Problem Statement**

If creating successful parks is the key to saving neighborhoods, will this philosophy work for Marigny and Bywater? If so, will the design itself increase its chances for being successful, while acting as a catalyst in improving these communities?

### **Background to Project**

Marigny and Bywater are locally and nationally registered historic districts located in New Orleans, Louisiana (Figure 1.1). These neighborhoods have been experiencing steady urban decay for more than a century. In spite of their more recent trend toward community revival, the decline of industry and neighborhood neglect has caused these communities' heritage and unique identities to slowly slip away.

A new park in the community could improve the quality of life for the residents and have a positive influence the revitalization trend for both Marigny and Bywater. Unfortunately, in the case of these two neighborhoods, available land for conversion to parks and public green spaces is extremely limited.



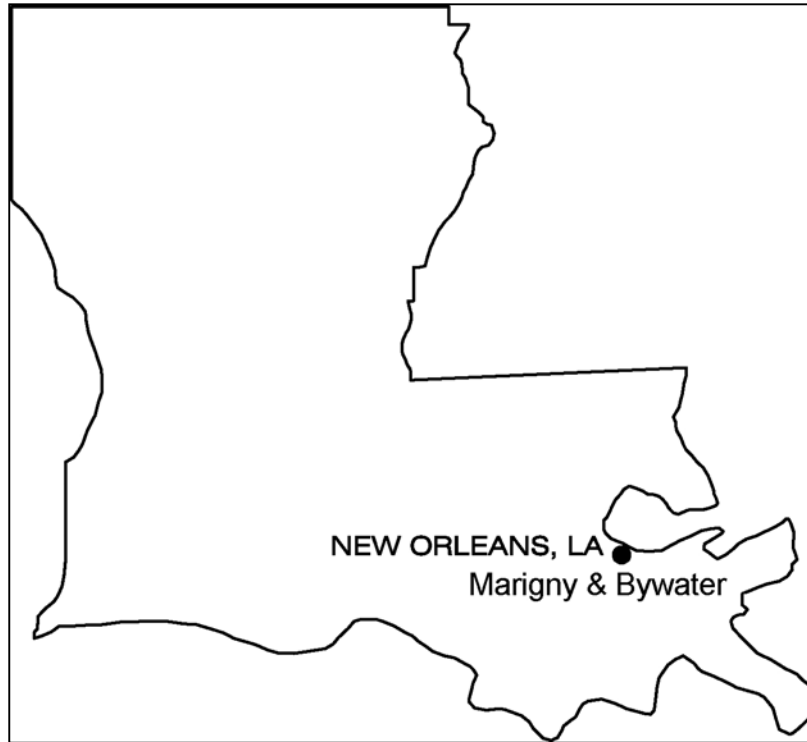


Figure 1.1 Location map of Marigny and Bywater Louisiana.

Marigny and Bywater are two of several neighborhoods belonging to New Orleans Planning District Seven, known in New Orleans as the Ninth Ward. This district possesses the least amount of land devoted to public green space and recreational areas than any other district in New Orleans. Currently, only 5 percent of approximately 3,700 acres that comprises District Seven is devoted to public and recreational use (Figure 1.2) (New Orleans City Planning Commission). Despite their lack of large open spaces and current economic conditions, Marigny and Bywater share many assets, several that are potential keys to promoting their revival: one being the Mississippi River, which has been an important source of cultural diversity and wealth for the city since 1718; a long and colorful history with some of the finest examples of early 19<sup>th</sup> century architecture in New Orleans; and more recently noted as an asset to the community, the Press Street railroad corridor.

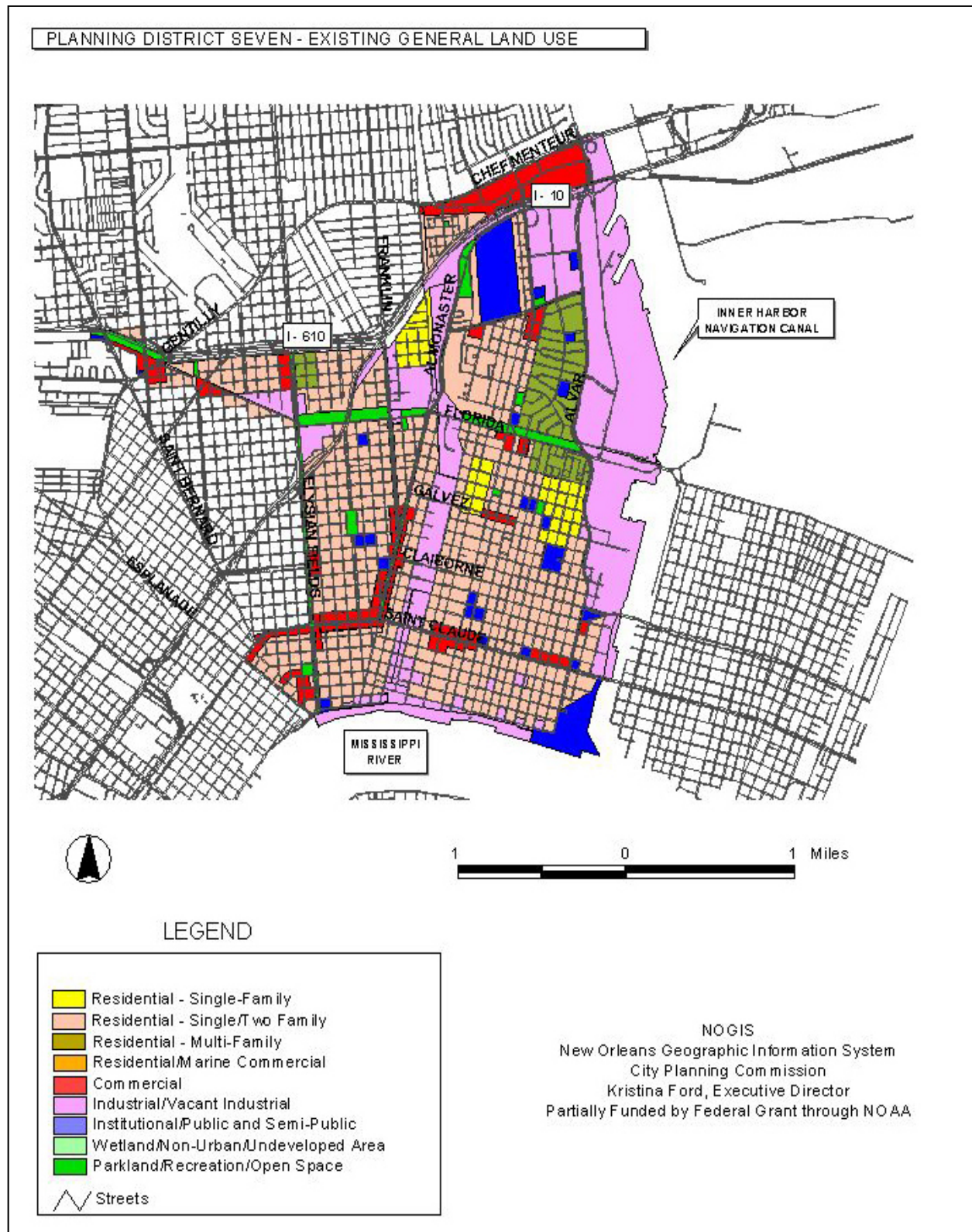


Figure 1.2 Planning District Seven – General Land Use.

The Press Street railroad corridor is possibly the one community feature that could solve several issues existing in this area today. These include:

- A source for public open space.
- Serve as the “first step” in improving the deteriorating neighborhoods and in bringing the community together.
- Improve upon the issue of desperately needed green space by introducing eleven additional acres of open space for active and passive recreation for District Seven.
- Play a role in preserving, reintroducing, and fostering local history.

An interesting feature of the corridor is its recognition as a historical site. One important historic site feature that still remains and signifies the dominant riverfront industrial presence in the area, are remnants of the Levee Steam Cotton Press building, originally constructed in 1832.

An important event that played out on Press Street was the initiation of the landmark civil rights case, Plessy vs. Ferguson that occurred on June 7, 1892. To date, this case has not been formally recognized in the area. Although of less significance, there are other interesting events that impacted this area. These events will be discussed in more detail in the historic overview and design chapter of this thesis. Figure 1.3 provides a map of the general area. The proposed park site is designated in yellow.

### **Current Proposal**

Currently, Parkway Partners and the Trust for Public Land are negotiating the purchase of a six-block tract of the railroad corridor. The tract of interest extends up Press Street, northward from the river at Chartres Street to St. Claude Avenue (Figure 1.3). Their specific objective is to develop a linear park in partnership with the New Orleans Department of Parks and Parkways. Parkway Partners hopes that this will improve the quality of life for the residents and initiate

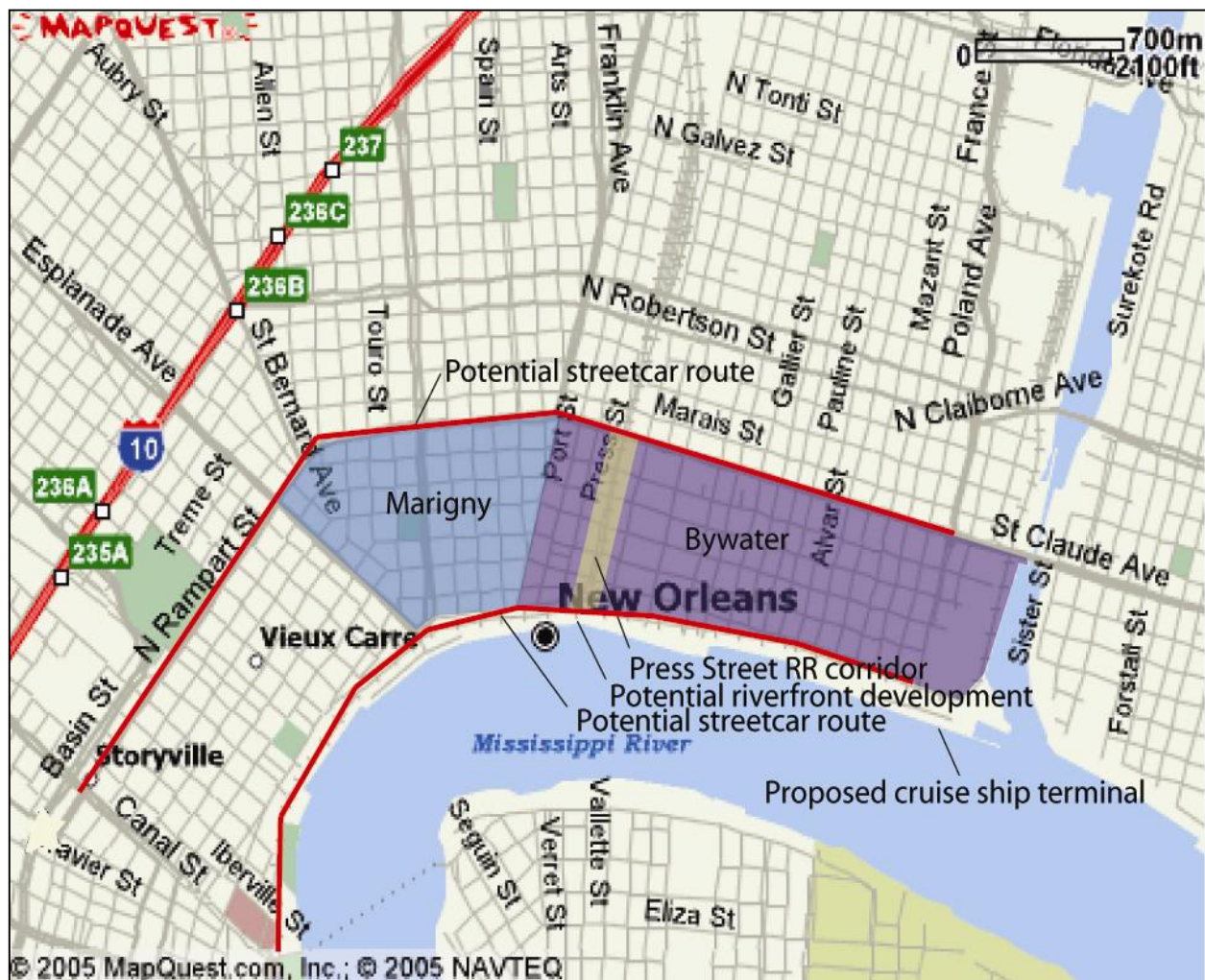


Figure 1.3 Project vicinity map.

more improvements within Marigny and Bywater (Parkway Partners).

Parkway Partners was established by Flo Schornstein (former director of the City of New Orleans' Department of Parks and Parkways) in 1982 in response to the city's ill-kept appearance and to augment the efforts of the Department of Parks and Parkways. The commission is a joint venture of citizens and the government that is for the maintenance and beautification of the city's neutral grounds, parks and playgrounds. Their objectives also include the nurturing of the urban forest, the transformation of unsightly vacant lots into community gardens and pocket parks, the preservation of historic monuments, and the development of new

parks. The commission was established by grants from the Junior League of New Orleans and the Greater New Orleans Chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women. As a nonprofit organization, it is fully supported by individual, corporate and foundation contributions, grants, and an annual fund-raiser (Parkway Partners).

Parkway Partners' goal is to utilize the Press Street corridor to bring the neighborhoods together through the common use of a linear park. Proposed improvements are to focus on historically appropriate site furniture, hardscape, and references to historic elements throughout the area. The need for additional amenities such as clean restrooms, comfortable seating, and drinking fountains was also addressed (Parkway Partners).

The University of New Orleans, College of Urban and Public Affairs (CUPA) was included in this effort by holding community meetings and design workshops to develop recommendations and design proposals for the corridor. Beginning in the summer of 1998, CUPA met with the residents of Marigny and Bywater neighborhoods to discuss the development of proposals for the Press Street corridor as a linear park. By the fall of 1998, these meetings and workshops concluded by identifying not only the need for accessible recreational and open green space, but demographic studies also indicated that children that live in the area do not have access to significant recreational facilities. Further discussion revealed that adults also wanted open green space for recreational purposes and as an amenity that would improve their neighborhood and quality of life. One idea that the residents expressed was a need for a public produce market. This would be the most significant feature in the park and would be located at the north end of the corridor at Press Street and St. Claude Avenue. As an important link in the linear park, the market would serve as an important node in bringing the community together (College of Urban and Public Affairs, University of New Orleans). Other resident

wishes included open fields for various types of active recreation, commemorations for the historic site of the cotton press, and to Homer A. Plessy. Improvements to Press Street with provisions for curbs, street trees, and improved intersections were also discussed. Additional features desired included a dog run, a children's playground and informal plantings of trees and shrubs (College of Urban and Public Affairs, University of New Orleans).

More specific issues were mentioned for each end of the proposed park. At the river end, additional parking is needed to accommodate large events held by NOCCA and more informal gathering spaces for students. At the north end of the corridor, there is a need for reclaiming open spaces from commercial and other uses of the corridor including a parking lot used as a dumping ground for abandoned vehicles. The removal of derelict railroad spurs was also indicated as an area of concern (Parkway Partners).

## **Objectives**

The intent of this thesis is to develop a new design for the linear park to be developed on the Press Street corridor. One of the objectives is to visually demonstrate how history can be used as a source of inspiration in the development of a strong park design that forges distinct historical and cultural links that everyone can recognize. The ideas presented will tie the history of the site and neighborhoods to the park by utilizing the unique characteristics of these areas as well as historical events. All will be created to stimulate interest and communication within the community.

This project will introduce new ideas and detailed elements that were not included in Parkway Partner's initial proposal. It will enhance the earlier proposal by introducing relevant facts of the site's history that lend inspiration for the conceptual design of site features appropriate for the park. This plan will also provide a more appropriate placement of proposed



historic commemorations based on the actual location of occurrences. In addition, the plan seeks to facilitate Parkway Partners' mission to recognize and restore the historical importance of the community through the design and use of the appropriate media, such as streetscape, signage, lighting, and architecture. These new elements will show how the Press Street corridor will be used to continue the heritage of Marigny and Bywater. Finally, this project will demonstrate how the design of specific site features will influence the park's success and positively influence the efforts to improve the deteriorated neighborhoods.

## **Methods**

New design ideas will be assembled from three basic components: a review of the history of Press Street and the surrounding area, a review and critique of the current proposal, and a thorough analysis of the proposed park site.

Initially, it was necessary to identify the scope of the linear park project by contacting the parties interested in pursuing the park's development, gain a basic understanding of District Seven's land use plan, and evaluate the existing issues and future projects that may influence the park's success.

CUPA's current design proposal was studied including a review of the needs and wants of the community that were considered in the development of their design. In order to understand CUPA'S design ideas for the corridor, and to generate a new vision for the park, a visual appraisal of existing site conditions was made to develop a site analysis. This included the identification of its current and potential uses, usable space, hazardous areas, noise and traffic circulation.

A review of literature will trace the course of history of Marigny, Bywater and the Press Street corridor and describe how the areas flourished before their decline. What were these areas

like, what happened, and how are these areas are viewed today? Data used in this process was collected from various sources including news articles, video documentaries, Internet, museums and historic maps.



## **CHAPTER 2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

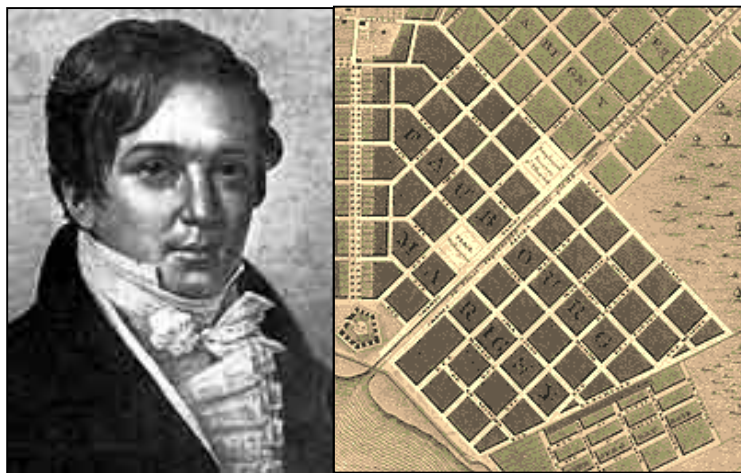
### **Establishment of New Orleans**

In 1682, Renee Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle sailed down the Mississippi River from Canada and staked claim to its entire watershed, naming it Louisiana in honor of King Louis XIV of France. Shortly there after, Jean Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, La Salle's brother, insisted upon establishing a French colony at the junction of Bayou St. John and the Mississippi River. Initially, the location for the settlement seemed uninhabitable due to its swampy nature and the fact that the area was below sea level. However, it's potential to become a port city seemed clear and in 1718, Bienville created New Orleans as the capital of Louisiana (Wholehost, New Orleans Business Internet Community).

The city's immediate success promoted the rapid expansion of the city and created a demand for land beyond the city's original boundaries. Late in the 1700's, at the time of this major growth period, plantations occupied much of the land directly downriver from New Orleans. These plantations produced rum, and various crops including vegetables, citrus, grain, sugarcane and cotton. The first known plantation was the La Brasserie (the Brewery), which was owned by Pierre Dreux, who established it soon after the founding of New Orleans. Through the years, many of these plantations changed ownership, but in most cases they remained in production. While the city continued to prosper, the plantations scattered throughout this area became the source of land for new suburbs to accommodate the influx of immigrants and industry. By the late 1700's and early 1800's, many plantation owners began subdividing their estates to accommodate this growth.

## Faubourg Marigny

In 1805, plantation owner Bernard Xavier Phillippe de Marigny de Mandeville (1785-1868) requested permission from the city council to subdivide a portion of his plantation into lots to develop a plan for the first suburb of New Orleans, Faubourg Marigny. Upon obtaining approval from the council, Marigny commissioned Nicolas de Finiel, a French engineer, to draft a plan for the neighborhood in which he completed on March 16, 1806. Finiel skillfully planned to tie the original streets of New Orleans into this new suburb, which would ultimately become an extension of the French Quarter. The Marigny canal established the pattern of the streets, forty-five degrees off of the Vieux Carre' pattern (National Register of Historic Places). Figure 2.1 presents a portrait of Bernard de Marigny next to an 1816 map of Faubourg Marigny.



(Left) SOURCE: New Orleans Public Library.

(Right) SOURCE: Library of Congress.

Figure 2.1 Bernard de Marigny and first suburb of New Orleans.  
Faubourg Marigny, as shown in the 1815 plan of New Orleans.

As Faubourg Marigny developed, it became primarily a residential area for Creoles, free people of color, Spanish, Italians, Germans, and Irish. Development of the district took place

from west to east, with the first buildings being built closer to the river. Originally, Faubourg Marigny only extended to Spain Street, but within a short time, the booming area had extended itself through the remainder of the Marigny plantation, to what is now Franklin Street (Figure 2.3) (National Register of Historic Places).

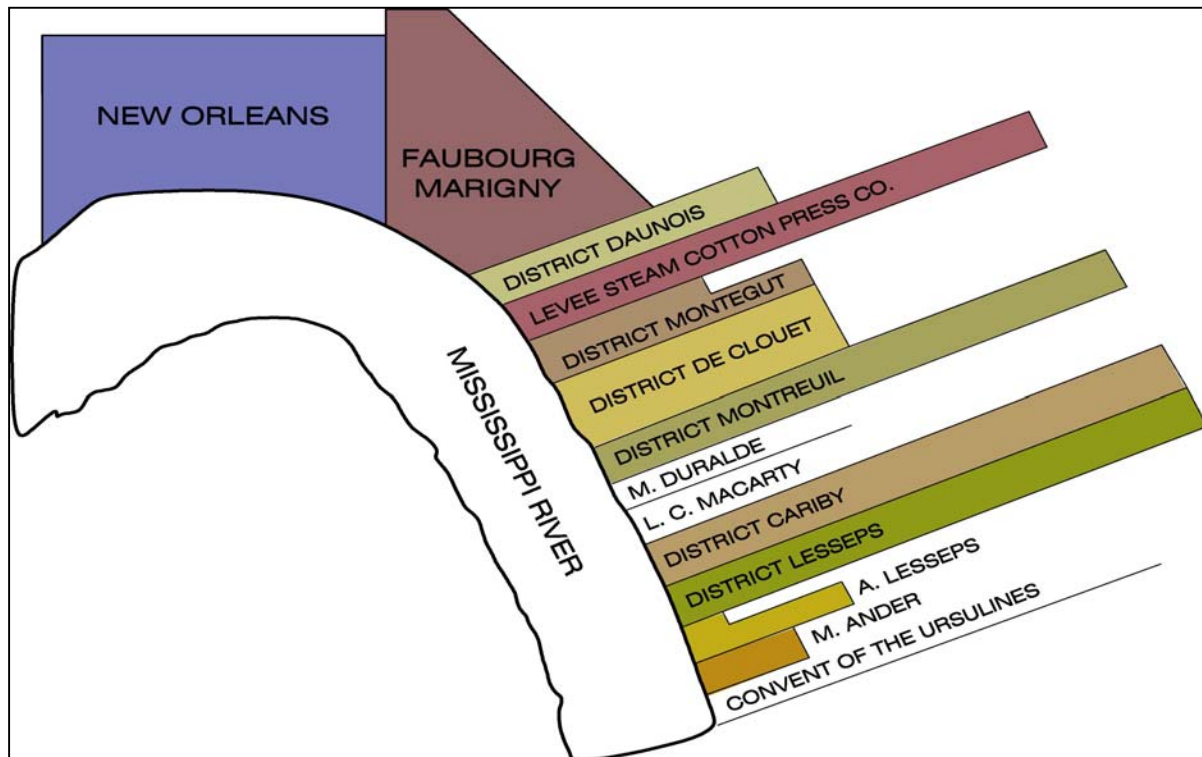


Figure 2.2 Map of Faubourg Marigny, 2002.

### **Faubourg Washington (Bywater)**

Beginning in 1806, the tract of land just down river from Faubourg Marigny, the Daunois plantation (the Brewery, formerly own by Pierre Dreux), and several tracts immediately below it became sources of land for five new faubourgs or districts: De Clouet, Montegut, Montreuil, Cariby and deLesseps (Figure 2.3). These lesser districts were all named after their establishing

land owners. Eventually, these districts were combined, and in 1836 the area became known as Faubourg Washington (Bywater Neighborhood Association). Faubourg Washington developed into a working class neighborhood that reflected a mixture of churches, schools, small businesses, factories, and warehouse structures placed throughout the network of residential housing (New Orleans 24 7).



SOURCE: Based on the Charles F. Zimpel map of the City of New Orleans, 1834.  
Figure 2.3 Downriver districts created by landowners subdividing their plantations.

“While the Americans settled upriver above the original settlement, the French, Creoles and the free persons of color settled in the French Quarter, Faubourg Marigny and this newly subdivided area down river. By 1945, Faubourg Washington was for the most part completely subdivided. In 1860, about 20% of the population of New Orleans were German immigrants, most of whom settled in Faubourg Washington” (Bywater Neighborhood Association).

During the time of the Civil War, this area contained one of the largest populations of free Black people (Crane).

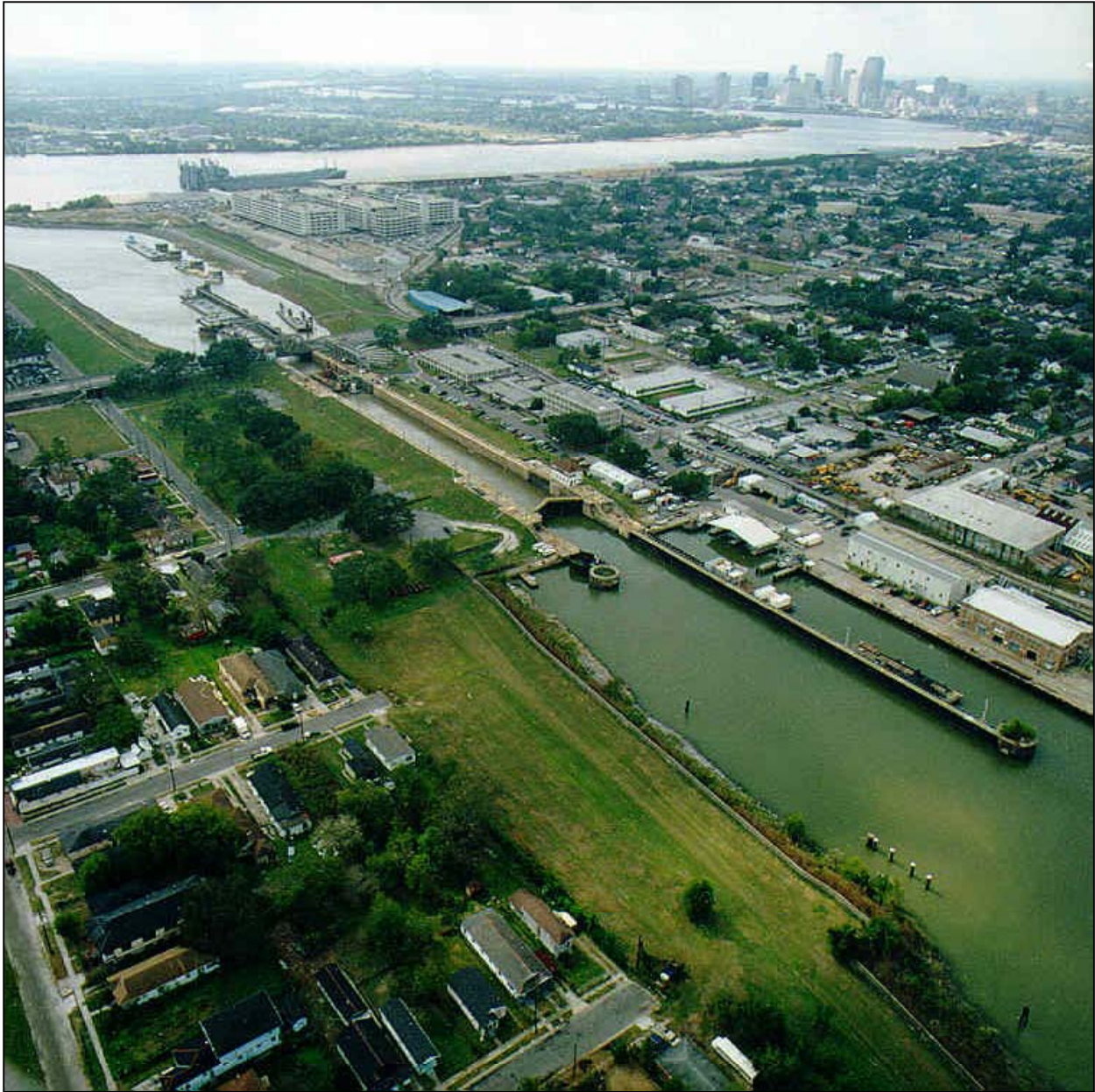
### **Area Industry**

Industry played a major role in influencing the pattern of development of these communities, not only influencing the early growth of the area, but also attributing to its decline. Faubourg Marigny and Faubourg Washington flourished with industry through the 1860's. However, a depression occurred following the Civil War resulting in the areas first encounter with decline. The depression is thought to have been caused by the halt in commercial trade during the war, and the heavy taxes that were imposed by the federal government once the war was over (Ingram Haus). Faubourg Washington relatively remained in this slump through the late 1800's, but by the 1920's conditions within the community began to worsen. The expansion of New Orleans' port facilities through the construction of the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal linked the Mississippi River to Lake Pontchartrain. The canal provided an alternate and easier route to the Gulf of Mexico, eliminating the need to navigate the mouth of the Mississippi. Initially, it was thought that it would stimulate industrial growth in this area. Though some industrial growth occurred, unfortunately the canal isolated Faubourg Washington by forming a physical boundary, leaving Faubourg Washington without the potential for new growth, leading to its further decline (Breaux, et. al.). Figure 2.4 provides a view of the Inner Harbor Navigation canal.

The industrial activity of the area began upriver before the initial establishment of Faubourg Marigny. One of the earliest was the sawmill owned by Bernard de Marigny's grandfather. This booming establishment sat near the edge of the Mississippi River.



The Marigny canal was the source of power for the sawmill and also the route for which raw timber was transported to the mill. Figure 2.5 presents a view of New Orleans from the Marigny plantation. The sawmill can be seen in the distance. In 1831, the completion of the



SOURCE: Photo by US Army Corps of Engineers.  
Figure 2.4 Aerial view of the Inner Harbor Navigation Canal.

Pontchartrain Railroad brought more business to the area. This railroad was the first in the United States, west of the Alleghenies. The tracks ran parallel with the Marigny canal carrying passengers from the river to the resort area of Milneburg on Lake Pontchartrain. The railroad flourished, however, one year after the railroad's completion, the mill was abandoned. Bernard Marigny renamed this section the Champs Elysees, now known as Elysian Fields Avenue and it remains as a major circulation avenue in New Orleans (National Register of Historic Places, Faubourg Marigny Area).

During the early 1800's, the Mississippi River was the economic engine for the city of New Orleans. Subsequently, industry expanded along the river. Various industries, warehouses, brickyards, lumberyards, sugar mills, rice mills, and cotton mills were established in the suburbs along the riverfront to support new development and area plantations (Breaux, James, et al.).

In 1831, during this prolific period in New Orleans, the Levee Steam Cotton Press Company purchased the lower portion of the Daunois plantation in order to construct the largest steam cotton press of its kind. This industrial enterprise, which was completed in 1832, occupied two blocks along the river and employed many individuals from Marigny and Bywater. The building and press cost \$500,000, and had the capacity to produce 200,000 bales of cotton per year. The paveless street that served the press was named Cotton Press Street, which was later shortened to Press Street. Figure 2.6 presents a lithograph by John William Hill depicting view of New Orleans from the lower cotton press in 1852 (Bywater Neighborhood Association).

With the cotton press being one of the largest processors of cotton at the time, the need for a railroad to provide support was essential. A railroad was built to serve the press and other industries near by. This marked the beginning of the railroad history for Press Street (Greater New Orleans Community Data Center).

The railroad changed owners over the years and by 1883, the East Louisiana Railroad owned the rights to the track. The East Louisiana Railroad operated from New Orleans to Pearl River Mississippi, Covington, and Meridian Mississippi. During its existence, the East Louisiana Railroad built a train depot at the corner of Press Street and Royal Street. This depot gained notoriety as the setting for initiating the Plessy vs. Ferguson case (Louisiana Rail Site).

The property was sold to New Orleans & North Eastern Railroad Company in 1902. Eventually, Norfolk Southern Railroad purchased the tracks. Today the railroad remains in operation, primarily used as a switching yard and for servicing the industrial activity that still exists in the area. The tracks and one block of adjacent land are what are referred to as the Press Street railroad corridor (Louisiana Rail Site).



Courtesy of Williams Research Institute, New Orleans.

Figure 2.5 A view of New Orleans from the lower cotton press, 1852.





Courtesy of Williams Research Institute, New Orleans.

Figure 2.6 A distant view of the sawmill from the Marigny plantation.

### **Plessy vs. Ferguson**

The Plessy vs. Ferguson case resulted from Homer Plessy, a one-eighth black thirty-year-old shoemaker, who was in violation of the “Separate Car Act.” On June 7, 1892, after purchasing a first class ticket on the East Railway, from New Orleans to Covington, Plessy, who was considered to be black in the eyes of the law, obtained a seat in the “white” passengers’ car. When he was asked to move, he refused, resulting in his arrest (North Park University, Chicago).

The “Separate Car Act” had been established in 1890. It declared that all rail companies carrying passengers in Louisiana had to provide separate but equal accommodations for white and nonwhite passengers. The penalty for sitting in the wrong compartment was a fine of \$25 or 20 days in jail (Street Law & the Supreme Court Historical Society).

After Plessy was jailed and found guilty, he eventually brought the case before the United States Supreme Court. On May 18, 1896, the Supreme Court upheld the ruling of the lower

court. According to the Supreme Court, Louisiana's law was not fostering inferiority in blacks, just separating them (Wikipedia Encyclopedia).

“This case helped cement the legal foundation for the doctrine of separate but equal” which permitted separation of the races, but only as long as facilities for both races were of equal quality. With the failure to provide African-Americans with genuinely equal facilities and resources, conditions worsened in the years after the Plessy decision, thereby depriving African-Americans of their rights, particularly under the Fourteenth Amendment, as citizens of the United States, entitling them to the same treatment as any other citizens.” Although this particular case was never overturned, later rulings have rendered the original decision as invalid (Wikipedia Encyclopedia).

### **The 1900's, The Decline of the Community**

Upon the completion of the Industrial Canal, many of the new port facilities being developed were built along the industrial canal, leaving riverfront warehouses and wharves vacant. As a result, Marigny and Bywater became targets of crime and vandalism. Real estate in the area declined in value and many homes were left neglected or abandoned (New Orleans City Planning Commission). This condition continued through World War II. Following the war, a group of businessmen thought that coming up with a new name for Faubourg Washington might lead to revitalization of the area. In 1947, they sponsored a contest at a local high school to come up with a new name. “Bywater,” the winner of all of the entries seemed appropriate for the area, since Faubourg Washington was surrounded by water on all sides (Mississippi River, Industrial Canal and Florida Canal). Bywater has remained the name of the neighborhood ever since (Bywater Neighborhood Association). Figure 2.7 provides a current map of Bywater.

The desegregation of the New Orleans public schools began in the late 1960's. Many of the Ninth Ward students fled to neighboring St. Bernard Parish where all white schools were still intact. This mass exodus from the area, again led to further decline of the neighborhoods as the desegregated schools were often neglected (Offbeat: New Orleans' and Louisiana's Music Magazine).

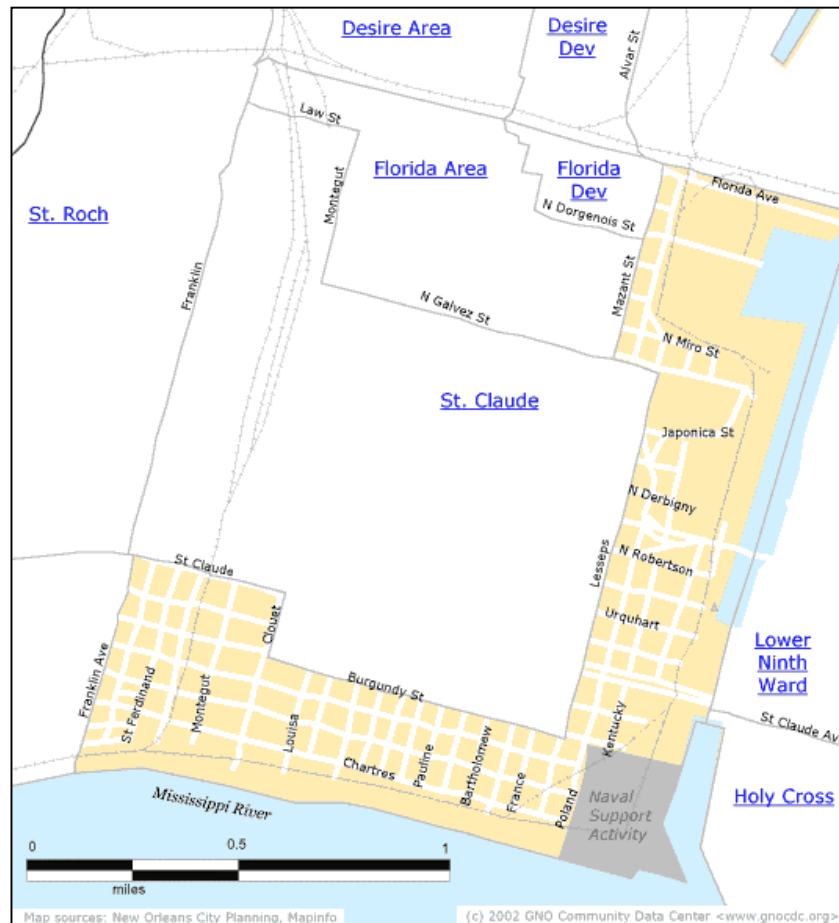


Figure 2.7 Map of Bywater, 2002.

Marigny and Bywater experienced natural disasters as well. In 1965, Hurricane Betsy hit the New Orleans area and flooded the Ninth Ward with fourteen feet of water. It took ten days for the floodwaters to subside. A reported sixty-seven people died as a result. (Offbeat: New Orleans' and Louisiana's Music Magazine).

“Although many young home buyers began restoring historic structures in the 1970's, the area reached its lowest point in the 80's. District Seven experienced one of the city's highest rates of population loss between 1980 and 1997. In 1980, the population of District Seven was 61,594 (46,772 classified as black, 14,822 deemed non black), reduced to 43,031 (37,284 blacks, 5,747 non black) by 2002” (District Seven as established by the New Orleans Planning Commission, includes the Ninth Ward and Marigny) (Offbeat: New Orleans' and Louisiana's Music Magazine).

The residents of District Seven, which includes Marigny and Bywater, have not fared well over the last twenty years. In 1980, the average family yearly income was \$11,848. From 1980 to 2002, that figure only rose by \$402 which means, that families living in District Seven are surviving on a mere \$12,250 a year (Offbeat: New Orleans' and Louisiana's Music Magazine). According to the 2000 census information, neighborhood population is continuing to decline at a rate of 2% per year. Predictions are that this trend will continue.

### **Current Conditions**

In the early 1990's, Marigny and Bywater began experiencing renewed interest. Marigny has become a popular and natural extension of the French Quarter. Restaurants, shops, guesthouses, and other music and entertainment venues have spilled into the upper portion of Marigny between Esplanade and Elysian Fields. Due to Faubourg Marigny's close proximity to the French Quarter, real estate values are significantly higher than that of neighboring Bywater. Bywater, on the other hand, is cheaper which has resulted in a surge of bohemian culture to the Bywater area. Both neighborhoods are known for their cultural diversity as well as a mixture of residential, neighborhood commercial, and industrial development (Offbeat: New Orleans' and Louisiana's Music Magazine).

Tremendous efforts have continued to help Bywater and Marigny, through the active support of their neighborhood associations, and by civic and government agencies including Parkway Partners, the Trust for Public Land. Over the last ten years, there have been numerous renovations due to the city acquisition of property for public use, such as neighborhood gardens supported by Parkway Partners. Real estate investors have also purchased older properties for renovation, resulting in a dramatic increase in property values, especially in Marigny. Though the renovation of some homes is occurring, the number of houses coming up for sale is minute, leaving the revitalization in the area on a slow path (Offbeat: New Orleans' and Louisiana's Music Magazine).

### **Future Outlook**

Currently, there are several interesting projects underway that are geared towards promoting economic stability for the Marigny and Bywater neighborhoods.

The Audubon Institute has discussed the possibility of extending the Riverfront Streetcar line into this area as far as Poland Avenue as part of the 'Riverfront 2000' initiative. A similar project begin discussed is the reintroduction of the Desire Streetcar line into the area.

To bolster the riverfront development in the area, the New Orleans Regional Transit Authority in conjunction with the Federal Transit Administration plans to reintroduce the famous Desire Street Car Line down the neutral ground of Saint Claude Avenue (Figures 2.8 and 2.9) (Bywater Neighborhood Association).

Through state funding made available through the Louisiana Bond Commission and Governor Kathleen Blanco, a cruise ship terminal has been approved for construction on the river at Poland Avenue. Seven million dollars has been approved for construction of a temporary

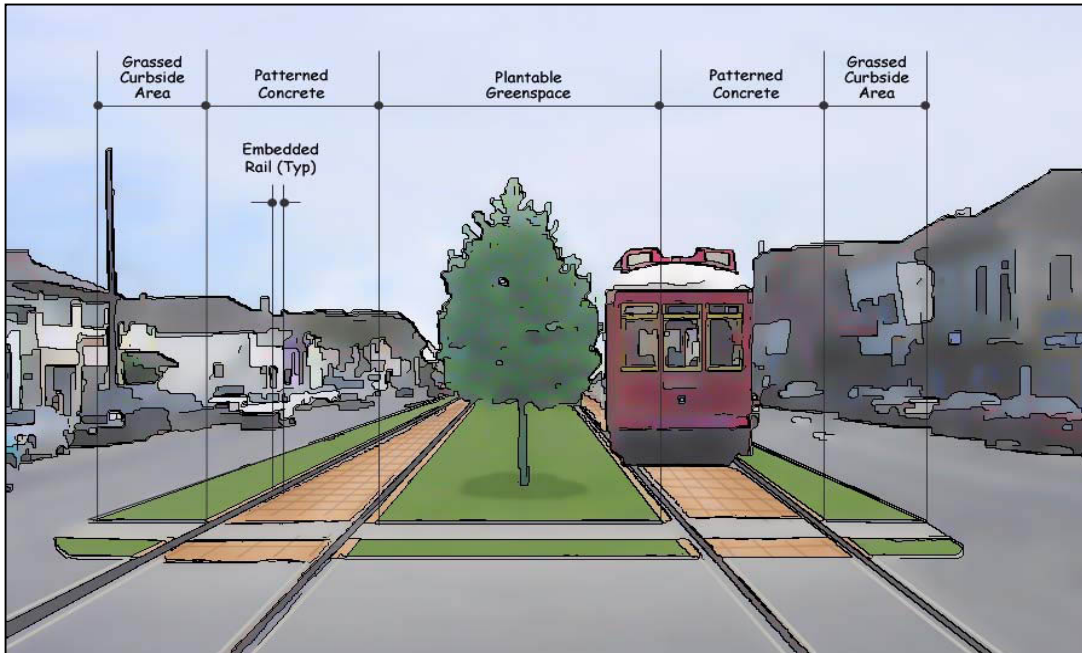
terminal to be completed by mid-year 2006. Once more funding is available a permanent terminal will be erected.

Another riverfront project that is being discussed is the construction of an amphitheater on the Press Street wharf. At the cost of seven million dollars, the public will be able to board private ferries and come by river to watch a show under an open air, soft fabric overhead structure.

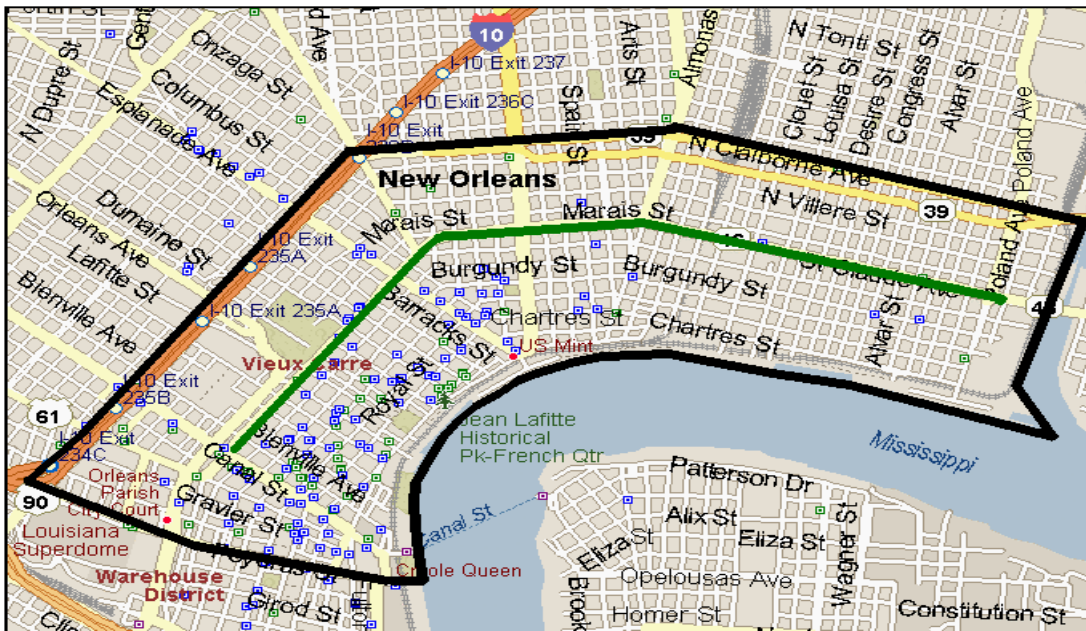
From another state funding source, the Louisiana Public Health Institute, has granted fifteen million dollars to improve the health of New Orleans. The grant will be partially spent to improve the walking and biking capabilities of New Orleans. Bywater will be the first to receive the funds, in hopes that Bywater will serve as an example for the rest of the city. The Bywater Neighborhood Association, in an effort to provide additional shading and a nicer curb appeal, has been working together with the Urban Tree Project of the Park Parkway Program by providing street trees to local property owners at no cost.

In an effort to promote local business, the Urban Conservancy and “Stay Local!” have announced the publication of the first St. Claude Shopping Guide. This effort is being promoted in part by the Bywater Marigny Current.

With so many good things occurring in these communities, the neighborhoods still face many challenges. Numerous properties remain vacant. Crime, illegal dumping, poor city services, and industrial related traffic continue to adversely impact the quality of life for the local residents. This leads to the current push by the citizens of Marigny and Bywater to seek additional solutions to improve their community.



SOURCE: Bywater Neighborhood Association.  
Figure 2.8 Proposed Desire Streetcar to run down Saint Claude Avenue.



SOURCE: Bywater Neighborhood Association.  
Figure 2.9 Proposed route of the Desire Streetcar Line.

### **CHAPTER 3. REVIEW AND CRITIQUE OF CURRENT DESIGN**

#### **Intent**

One of the objectives of this thesis was to review and critique CUPA's proposal for the development of a linear park along the Press Street corridor. The intent of the review was to identify the scope of the park project, gather the park's program information, and to use the proposal as the framework for developing a new park design. Several weaknesses in CUPA's proposal were noted. An objective of this thesis is to provide creative ideas to improve CUPA's proposal and offer design examples to strengthen the projects potential.

#### **Critique**

Several elements that were omitted that influenced the success of their design was the lack of a concept, limited use of historical references, and insufficient graphic communication. The most important design component needed was a strong concept. In design, the development of a creative theme is a crucial process that provides a project with an identity. CUPA's design lacks an overall theme. In CUPA's master plan, the proposed park amenities and some of the features derived through community meetings were vaguely designated by shaded areas and simple labeling. By employing a concept, a clearer understanding of the ideas driving the park design and what shape or form features and amenities may have taken would have been presented. Ultimately, a concept would have supported their goal to restore the historical importance of the area. Figure 4 .1 presents CUPA's master plan. Another weakness noted was the inadequate utilization of historical references. Both Parkway Partners and the community emphasized the importance of the history of the area in the parks conception. CUPA did attempt to address the community's desire to incorporate several commemorations into their design, but their placement appeared to be arbitrary and lacking in historical accuracy.



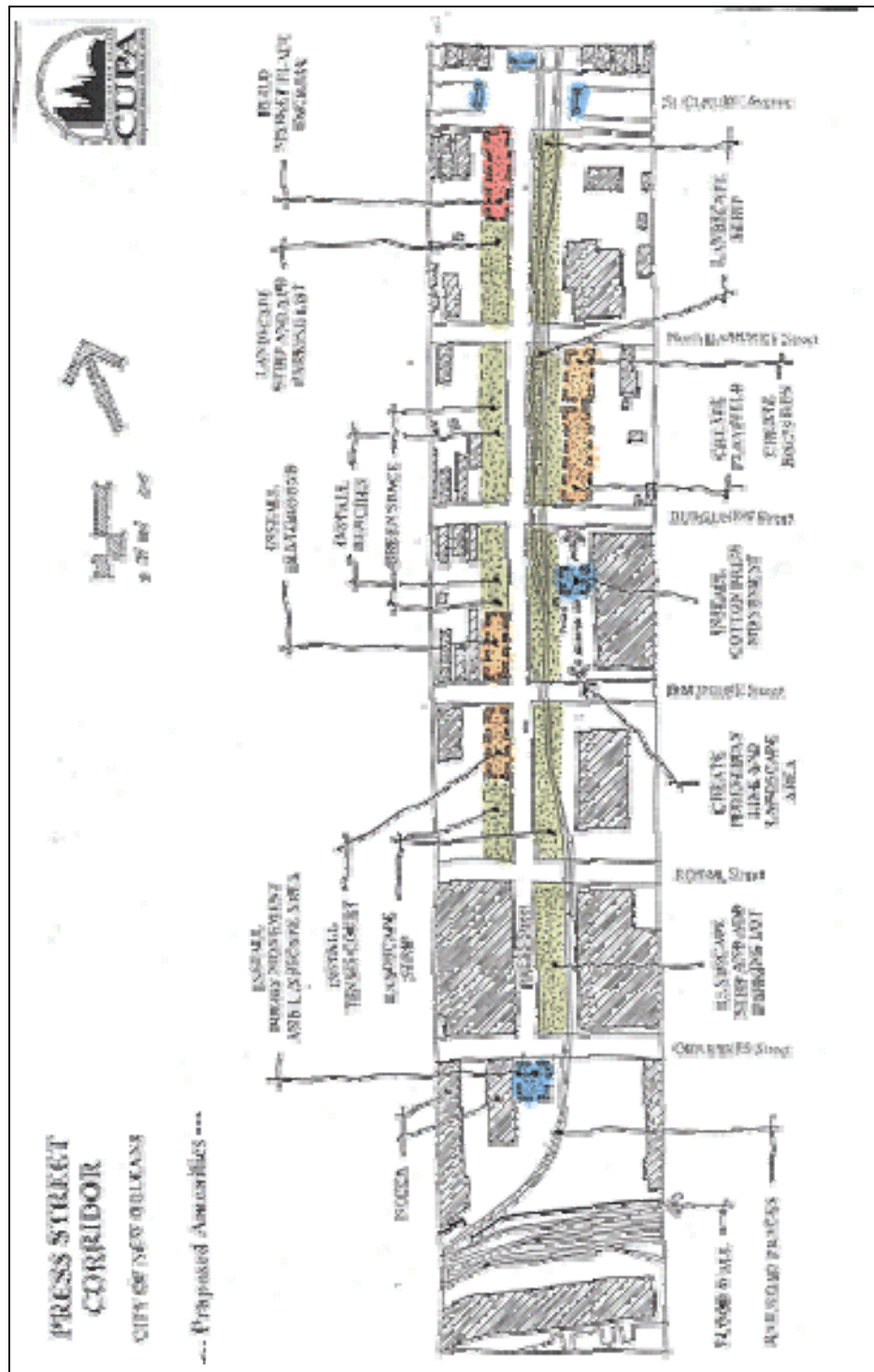
In order to make the commemorations more official and meaningful to the public, they should be placed in relationship to the specific site of the historic event. One example is the Levee Steam Cotton Press commemoration. This marker should have been located near Press Street and Chartres Street, closer to the NOCCA site. CUPA's placement indicates it to be located three blocks down the street, between Dauphine and Burgundy Street thereby failing to accurately recognize the original site of the cotton press (Figure 3.1). In addition, CUPA did not offer an idea for the design of the commemoration.

The community also wished to place a marker in the park to recognize the significance of Homer A. Plessy's 1892 challenge of Louisiana's law requiring separate but equal facilities for whites and Negroes in rail passenger cars. This commemoration is depicted on CUPA's plan as being located at Chartres Street and Press Street, more in relationship to the original site of the cotton press (Figure 3.1). A review of the area's history suggests a more appropriate placement would be on the corner of Press Street and Royal Street, the actual site of the occurrence. Similar to the marker for the cotton press, there was no indication given regarding the Plessy commemoration design.

Parkway Partner's vision was to highlight historical events that occurred in the community through the use of historically appropriate site furniture, lighting, etc placed strategically in the park. However, their design only proposed two commemorations. By not further developing or referencing more historical information into other aspects of the park's design, such as site furniture and lighting, CUPA failed to fully recognize the importance of use of history in the park's development.

## **Summary**

In summary, CUPA's design is visually unable to make the connections that were originally considered to be important as a design objective. Further, CUPA's graphics do not present a clear perspective of the park's true potential. As a result of a limited use of graphics to support their ideas and the limited use of history as a basis for designing specific park details, CUPA minimized the potential to stimulate the public's interest and support, possibly missing opportunities to obtain the necessary funding to develop the park (Figure 3.2).



SOURCE: University of New Orleans College of Urban and Public Affairs. Figure 3.1 CUPA's master plan.



SOURCE: University of New Orleans College of Urban and Public Affairs.  
Figure 3.2 CUPA's proposed Green Market perspective.

## CHAPTER 4. SITE INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

### Site Location

- Central to Marigny and Bywater.
- Close proximity to the French Quarter.
- Adjacent to potential streetcar routes.
- Adjacent to potential riverfront developments.
- Close proximity to proposed cruise ship terminal.

Figure 4.1 presents a map showing the location of the Press Street railroad corridor.

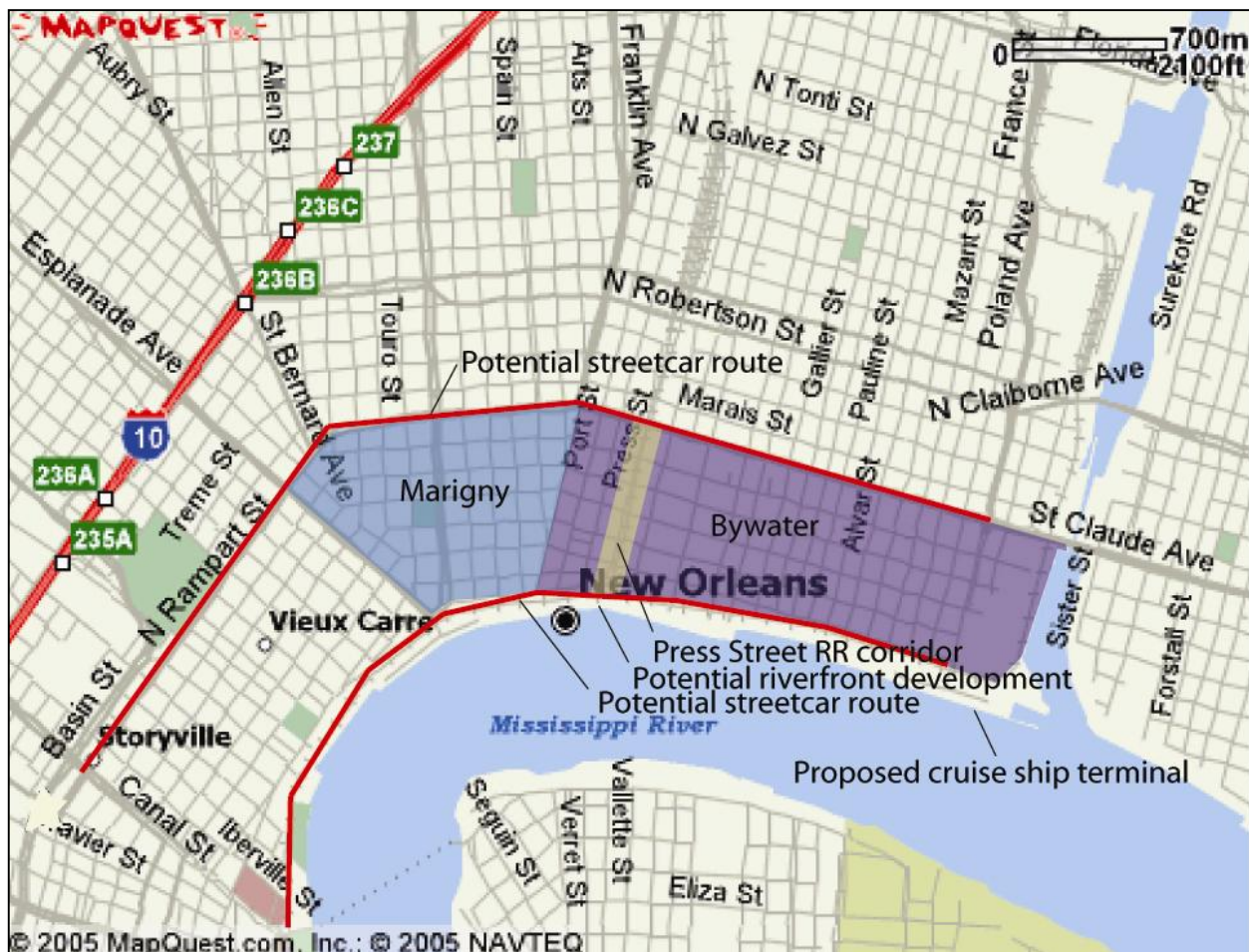


Figure 4.1



## Limits of Design

- Approximately 11 acres.
- Right of way of Saint Claude Avenue, and six blocks south to river flood wall.
- Minimum 10' buffer along adjacent commercial and residential areas.
- Figure 4.2 provides a map showing the limits of the park site.

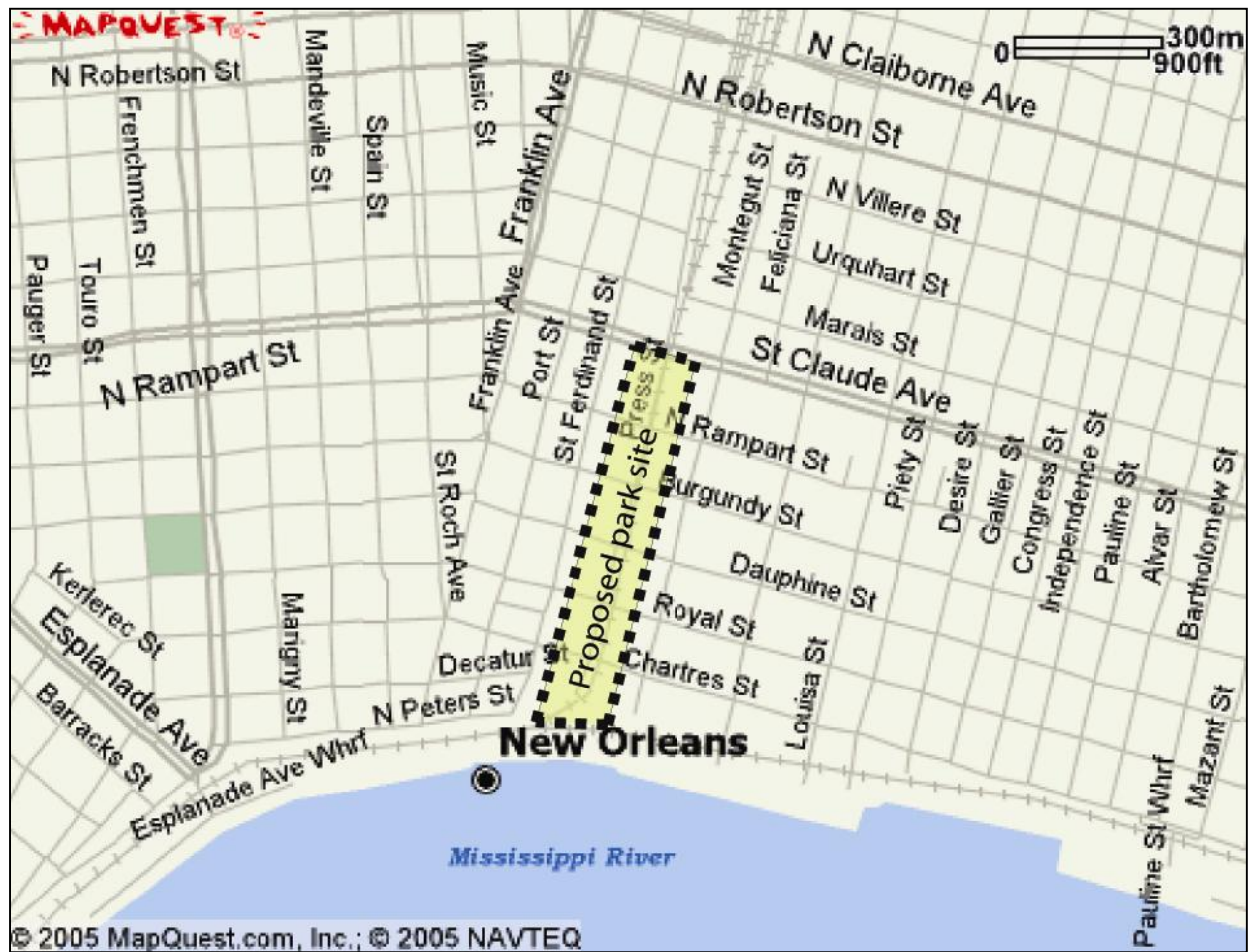


Figure 4.2 Map showing the limits of the park site.

## Current Land Use

- Norfolk Southern Railroad service and switching yard (figure 4.3).

## Adjoining Land Use

- New Orleans Center for Creative Arts.
- Commercial / industrial.
- Vacant commercial / vacant industrial.
- Residential.

## Other Uses

- Industrial related traffic and access to neighborhood and to NOCCA (figure 4.4).
- Illegal dumping and abandoned vehicles.
- Parking.
- Resident recreation.



Figure 4.3 Norfolk Southern locomotive approaching site.



Figure 4.4 Truck on Press St.

Figures 4.5 to 4.28 provide a sequence of photos of the site moving southward from Saint Claude Avenue and Press Street. Photos taken by author.



Figure 4.5 Saint Claude Ave. and Press St.



Figure 4.6 Adjacent warehouse.



Figure 4.7 Adjacent commercial.



Figure 4.8 Tracks adjacent to Press Street.



Figure 4.9 Intersection of Rampart St.



Figure 4.10 Ballast material stockpiling.





Figure 4.11 Open space adjacent to tracks.



Figure 4.12 Adjacent warehouse.



Figure 4.13 Open space adjacent to tracks.



Figure 4.14 Resident recreation.



Figure 4.15 Intersection of Dauphine St.



Figure 4.16 Adjacent warehouse.



Figure 4.17 Intersection of Royal St.



Figure 4.18 Tracks crossing Royal St.



Figure 4.19 Tracks adjacent to warehouse.



Figure 4.20 Informal parking on Press St.



Figure 4.21 Adjacent warehouse.



Figure 4.22 Adjacent warehouse.





Figure 4.23 Approaching NOCCA.



Figure 4.24 Intersection of Chartres St.



Figure 4.25 Adjacent vacant building.



Figure 4.26 Main entry to NOCCA.



Figure 4.27 Pedestrian crossing to NOCCA.



Figure 4.28 View from pedestrian crossing.

## Existing Utilities

- Overhead power.
- Domestic water.
- Sanitary sewer.

Figures 4.29 through 4.31 provide images showing various existing overhead utilities.

Photos taken by author.



Figure 4.29 Primary power lines.



Figure 4.30 Various utilities.



Figure 4.31 Various utilities.

## Traffic Circulation

- Press Street - two way, direction of travel, north and south.
- Saint Claude Avenue - Major artery two way, direction of travel, east and west.

- Rampart - one-way easterly direction of travel.
- Burgundy - one way, westerly direction of travel.
- Dauphine - one way, easterly direction of travel.
- Royal - one way, westerly direction of travel.
- Chartres - two way, direction of travel, east and west.

Figure 4.32 provides a map, a diagram of street circulation and the proposed site line.

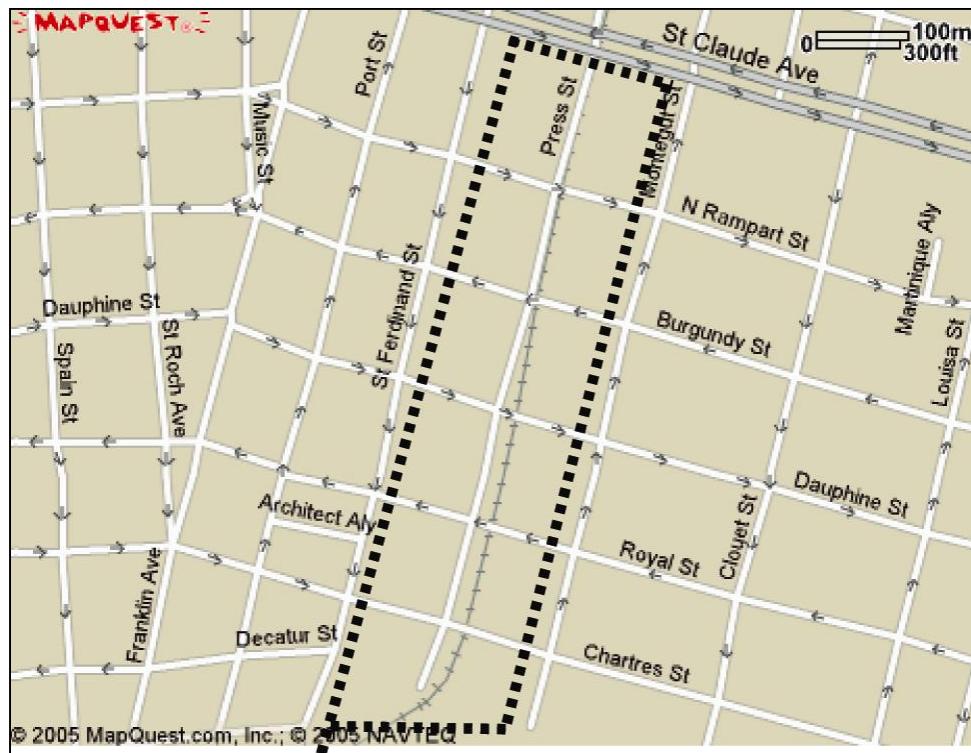


Figure 4.32

### General Site Condition

- Inadequate maintenance of railroad corridor.
- Lack of sidewalks or existing sidewalks are in poor condition.
- Press Street surface in poor condition.



- Illegal dumping, litter and abandoned vehicles.
- Poor condition of railroad ballast.

Figures 4.33 through 4.36 are images that provide examples of areas that reduce the aesthetic appearance of the site.

Photos taken by author.



Figure 4.33 Trash and debris on tracks.



Figure 4.34 Tall weeds on vacant lot.



Figure 4.35 Unearthed bollards.



Figure 4.36 Abandoned building slab.

### **Existing Vegetation and Landscape**

- Adjacent residential screening with trees and shrubs / gardens.
- Growth of volunteer tree species.
- Open grass areas.

- Limited street trees.
- Narrow Park like space.

Figures 4.37 through 4.54 provides a series of photos taken of existing vegetation and landscape along the western side and eastern side of the Press Street site.

Photos taken by author.



Figure 4.37 Vacant lot at St. Claude



Figure 4.38 High grass on vacant lot.



Figure 4.39 Existing trees on vacant lot.



Figure 4.40 Corner of Rampart St.





Figure 4.41 Rail tie planters.



Figure 4.42 Landscape buffer.



Figure 4.43 Landscape buffer.



Figure 4.44 Linear open space.



Figure 4.45 Intersection at Rampart.



Figure 4.46 Sidewalk entering site.





Figure 4.47 Open space.



Figure 4.48 Linear open space.



Figure 4.49 Linear open space.



Figure 4.50 Street plantings.



Figure 4.51 Remnant concrete slab.



Figure 4.52 North view from slab.



Figure 4.53 Remnant concrete slab.



Figure 4.54 Remnant concrete slab.

Figures 4.55 through 4.57 show larger open spaces on the eastern side of the Press Street site.

Photos taken by author.



Figure 4.55 Large open space at Rampart St.



Figure 4.56 Large open space at Rampart St.



Figure 4.57 Large open space at Rampart St.

## Soils and Topography

- Natural levee area, sandy soils.
- Minimal slope.

## Weather

Figure 4.58 provides monthly weather statistics for New Orleans.

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
High Temperature (F / C)	61 / 16	64 / 18	72 / 22	78 / 26	84 / 29	89 / 32	91 / 33	90 / 32	87 / 30	79 / 26	71 / 22	64 / 18
Low Temperature (F / C)	42 / 5	44 / 7	52 / 11	58 / 15	65 / 18	71 / 22	73 / 23	73 / 23	69 / 21	59 / 15	51 / 11	45 / 7
Precipitation (in / mm)	5 / 128	6 / 153	5 / 124	5 / 114	5 / 116	6 / 148	6 / 155	6 / 157	6 / 140	3 / 78	4 / 112	6 / 146
Wind Speed (mph / kmh)	10 / 15	10 / 17	10 / 17	10 / 16	9 / 14	7 / 12	6 / 10	6 / 10	7 / 12	8 / 12	9 / 14	9 / 15
Wind Direction (from the)	North	North	South	South	SSE	SSW	SW	NE	NE	NE	ENE	North
Cloud Cover (out of 8)	5.5	5.0	5.1	4.6	4.6	4.6	5.3	4.9	4.4	3.6	4.5	5.1

SOURCE: wunderground.com

Figure 4.58

## Site Orientation

- North / South.

## Noise

- Saint Claude
  - Automobile traffic.
  - Locomotive diesel engine.
  - Locomotive horn.
  - Crossing bells.

- Press Street
  - Locomotive Noise.
  - Adjacent industrial.
- Riverfront industrial activity.
  - Ship horns.
  - Diesel engines.



## **CHAPTER 5. DESIGN APPROACH**

### **Developing Connections**

After assessing the limitations of CUPA's design in conjunction with the history of these areas, a determination will be made as to which historical occurrences will make the best examples in creating both an overall concept for the park and in generating supportive details, details that solidify the objective of restoring some of the historical importance of the site. Specific park features that will be discussed include: Press Street site furniture and lighting, signage, commemorations placement, and design, the market, planting design, and art and sculpture.

Like Parkway Partners, this thesis places a strong importance on bringing people together by making connections.

What is the definition of connection or to connect? And what elements of a park can be used to connect the community? Webster's Dictionary defines connection as a relation or association. Connect meaning to show or think of as related.

Typically, associations are created as a result of sharing something in common. In the case of Marigny and Bywater, the residents all share something in common. They all are residents of two historically rich and culturally diverse communities, having a mutual desire to come together, and both living in neighborhoods experiencing the need for improvement.

How can these similarities and desires be woven together to create a stronger bond between communities? What will influence these people to feel closer to their community and neighbors and to instill a greater respect for the park and therefore their community? This will be accomplished through the creation of associations to the circumstances that they have most in common, their diminishing community heritage.

As humans, we seem to have a strong connection to our history, always looking for something recognizable about the places we have known or the experiences we have shared. Most of us can agree, that we as a society are always in search of something that looks familiar or a moment that we can remember. “By enriching the number of coordinated elements that engage the eye with richness and complexity, it can also strengthen design vitality and serve as a catalyst for better realizing the power of place” (Fleming, Ronald Lee).

The design of site details is a very important factor in creating a sense place. Strong associations can be established in a number of ways, but most often through the visual translation of time and place. These connections can be translated through architecture, ornamental lighting standards, through the patterns and types of hardscape materials, signage, sculpture, commemorations, streetscape and even landscape design. Therefore, it is necessary to determine the most effective medium in which to develop this connection.

### **Design Analogy**

In order to apply the concept of using history to make connections, one must first have a means of visualizing the current status of the area. One way to describe the relationship of these neighborhoods to their diminishing heritage and economic state can be realized through the use of a simple analogy.

Overall, the condition of these neighborhoods, including the railroad corridor can be characterized as an old ragged shoe. In order for the tattered shoe to be worn again, it will require new laces. Marigny can be described as the left panel of the shoe, while Bywater is the right panel. A supporting element of a shoe is the tongue, the Press Street corridor could be described as the tongue of the old shoe, which in this case, lies between the worn and tattered communities. Like the tongue of the shoe, the Press Street corridor can serve as the foundation

on which the historical and cultural laces of Press Street, Marigny and Bywater rest. Similar to a shoe receiving new laces, a historic park design, the people of Marigny and Bywater can be pulled together with renewed life and stability. It is without these historical laces, that a portion of the heritage of these communities is essentially lost, and the life of these historic neighborhoods could continue to decline. The Marigny and Bywater communities certainly need new laces in order to stop the decline of the neighborhoods.

Just as Nicolas de Finiel skillfully tied the new streets of Faubourg Marigny to the French Quarter, skillfully tying the communities of Marigny and Bywater to a creative and thoughtful linear park design will firmly connect the communities historically and culturally (National Register of Historic Places).

## **CHAPTER 6. PARK DESIGN**

### **Design Concept**

As shown in the history review, the area's industry played an integral role in the success and downfall of these neighborhoods. To recognize this importance in the community, the concept will reflect this presence. The industrial nature of Press Street will become the central link and major focus in the design of the linear park. More emphasis will be placed on Press Street as the central design feature, by using the history of Press Street as inspiration for commemorations, hardscape, site furniture, lighting, architecture, art and sculpture. Press Street will serve as the central artery and the setting for commemorating the historic importance of the street as well as moments in history that were lost in this area. Press Street will also take on the task of capturing the flow of the intersecting streets, just as the bayous and canals flow into the Mississippi river. It will also be the docking point for residents and visitors that will utilize the park, market, and school. Ultimately, Press Street will take on the responsibility for becoming owner and narrator of history in this park. Therefore the name given to the park in this particular project will be Cotton Press Park, after the original name given to Press Street. In addition to the use as a park, Press Street will also become a grander entrance for NOCCA.

### **Incorporating Historical Elements**

New design ideas will be presented by first reviewing the history of the area, then following up by providing examples of how history will be used in the design. Specific park features that will be discussed include: Press Street site furniture and lighting, signage, commemorations placement and design, the market, landscape design, art and sculpture.





Figure 6.1 Master plan.



Figure 6.2 Partial master plan.



Figure 6.3 Partial master plan.





Figure 6.4 Partial master plan.

## **Streetscape, Site Furniture and Lighting**

“Some of the best examples of artist-designed street furniture tell specific stories about their sites, reiterating or reinforcing the history of the place” (Fleming, Ronald Lee, pg. 92).

It is this philosophy that supports the design ideas created for site furniture and lighting. Press Street is the primary route for vehicular circulation through the park and a connecting element between several important historic features, therefore special attention was given to the streetscape design.

Press Street is currently home to NOCCA (the former cotton press) and the railroad, and therefore the histories of these two features were incorporated into the design. The following design ideas will demonstrate how these two site features were tied together by using history to provide continuity within the linear nature of the park (Figure 6.1).

- As the gateway to the park, a railroad-crossing structure will be constructed to function as the introductory historic element into the railroad-industrial concept that will be present throughout the park. The steel structure spans and arches over Press Street, creating the grand entrance into the park. Large Georgian style lettering is used for the park’s name, while small bronze medallions placed on the front and back of the vertical structure flank the park’s name. The medallions depict a cotton boll encircled with the name Cotton Press Park and date of establishment (Figure 6.5).
- As a repetitive historic element used to continue the association with the cotton press, large bronze medallions will be incorporated into the street design and located at the midpoint of each block of Press Street. Medallions depict a cotton boll encircled with the name Cotton Press Street and date of establishment. In order to insure that traffic speed

remains at a safe speed, these medallions will be incorporated into truncated speed reduction features (Figure 6.6).

- As Marigny developed, Bernard Marigny named the streets of his new faubourg with poetic or politically significant names which include:
  - Rue de Bons Enfants - Good Children (changed to Saint Claude Avenue)
  - Rue d'Amour - Love (changed to N. Rampart)
  - Rue des Grande Homme - Great Men (changed to Dauphine)
  - Rue Casa Calvo - Casa Calvo (changed to Royal)
  - Rue Moreau - Moreau (changed to Chartres)

With the passage of Ordinance 395 in 1850, these street names of the Marigny district were changed to match those streets of the Vieux Carre' (Chase). Although the names were changed before the existing streets extended to intersect Press Street, this project will assume that they would have eventually crossed Press Street. These former street names were reintroduced at the centers of intersections with medallions bearing street old name and graphic imagery illustrating its history. The specific design of the former street name medallions will be left up to local artists.

Throughout the park, street lighting will provide a sense of historic significance.

Two scales of lighting will be presented.

- At the pedestrian scale, custom designed cast-iron light standards reflecting a 19<sup>th</sup> century style will be placed at street intersections, and seating areas to provide continuity and connection to the cotton press. This lighting will be designed with ornate flora-like bases and fixtures with interpretative cotton boll shaped luminaries.

- At the vehicular scale, industrial style light standards will provide repetitive reminder of the rail-industrial concept. Banner signage will be attached to each of these light standards.
- Site furniture placed along Press Street will be reflective of 19<sup>th</sup> century cast-iron benches with ornamental ironwork and bench back detail depicting a cotton boll.
- Cast-iron bollards will be placed at pedestrian crossings along Press Street to reflect the historic 19<sup>th</sup> century cotton industry on Press Street. These bollards will resemble a boll of cotton on top of a crown to designate the past era “when cotton was king.
- Secondary entrance features will be placed at the park entrances of all of the intersecting streets. These steel structures will resemble the railroad-crossing structure at the main entrance of the park, however they will consist of only one vertical column with small medallions on either side. The medallions depict a cotton boll encircled with the name Cotton Press Park and date of establishment. Amber lighting is incorporated to alert oncoming traffic of reduced vehicle speed limit.
- Additional site furniture is to be designed to compliment existing features such as NOCCA, the railroad, and proposed features such as the market.



Figure 6.5 Elevation showing railroad structure at the park entrance.

## Hardscape

Hardscape patterns will be used to visually enhance streets and direct the user through the park.

- Press Street will be constructed with gray granite curbing and gray granite brick pavers. This material was the hardscape material typical of many of the old early streets of New Orleans. Remnants of this brick pattern can still be seen on Chartres Street near the entrance of NOCCA (Figure 6.7).



Figure 6.6 Medallion



Figure 6.7 Image of brick pattern.

- The suggestion of railroad ties will be incorporated into Press Street to suggest the path of tracks that led to the cotton press.
- Sidewalks are designed to provide access from the neighborhood to the proposed park and along Press Street. Sidewalks will be to be reminiscent of 19<sup>th</sup> century style noted in the area. Clay brick pavers in a herringbone pattern with soldier coarse brick transition banding patterns will reflect forms seen throughout the railroad-industrial concept.

## Commemorations

- Homer Plessy: The proposed location of commemoration will be on Press Street and Royal Street, the actual site of the occurrence, lending more meaning to the



commemoration. Based on the elements of the case, the Plessy commemoration will be reminiscent of a passenger train depot. The structure called the Press Street Depot, could function as an actual bus stop. The commemoration also will include a plaque bearing the story of Homer Plessy's civil rights case. Figure 6.8 presents a conceptual elevation for the Homer Plessy commemoration.



Figure 6.8 Elevation of the Homer A. Plessy historical marker.

- Levee Steam Cotton Press: proposed location of commemoration will be located at the terminus of the proposed plaza and the pedestrian entrance to NOCCA, in closer association of the actual cotton press site. The commemoration's design form will be an industrial style pedestal featuring old steam press equipment, bearing historical information about the history of the cotton press. Figures 6.9 and 6.10 are images that convey the overall idea and how the cotton press commemoration may be treated.



Figure 6.9 Quarry Market relic.



Figure 6.10 Quarry Market relic.

### Park Signage

- Intersections of Press Street were improved for safety. Vintage traffic/railroad signage used to direct traffic as well as blend with the railroad-industrial park concept
- This project directed attention to the preservation of NOCCA's history in the community, by incorporating elements of the cotton press into signage to promote NOCCA presence.
- Banner signage attached to lampposts with graphics to commemorate Cotton Press and NOCCA. NOCCA banner to say "NOCCA - Full Steam Ahead" or "NOCCA - Pressing On," in recognition of the historic building and site it has utilized and its importance to this area and New Orleans.
- Students of NOCCA to design banners for the park.

### Architecture

The renovation of the old cotton press building into NOCCA was one of the catalysts in the public's desire to improve their community. Not only has NOCCA preserved history, but it has also become a solid foundation for public involvement. This school represents the

community, and it continues to shape creative minds that have for so long been part of the heritage of these communities and New Orleans.

The architects that designed the additions to the cotton press have done a tremendous job of preserving its history when developing the new design for the school. The school, in part, is reminiscent of the historic cotton press, while newer additions to the renovated structure continue to commemorate its industrial importance to the area through the use of more modern warehouse forms and facades. An example of such can be seen in the courtyard area, where the earlier surrounding warehouses are reflected through modern architecture.

Like NOCCA, the Press Street corridor offers a great opportunity to appropriately recognize the industrial significance of the area. To demonstrate this, historic architectural forms and styles of railroad and other industries will be expressed throughout the park following the overall railroad-industrial concept.

Several of the buildings adjacent to NOCCA are vacant. These buildings could be utilized to create a community.

- Large multi-story building adjacent to NOCCA as art studios, classrooms or for additional support to the art community by developing affordable studio space, and storage for sculpture. Possible development as studio apartments (Figure 6.11).
- Large warehouse could be converted into a community health club, featuring a natatorium and indoor sports facilities. Warehouse doors will be turned into large picture windows that provide light and views in to the park and neighboring buildings. Loading platforms will be transformed into outdoor terraces (Figure 6.11).
- Cotton Press Pavilion structure with gear-like shade structures (Figure 6.12).



Figure 6.11 Community athletic center and future studios.

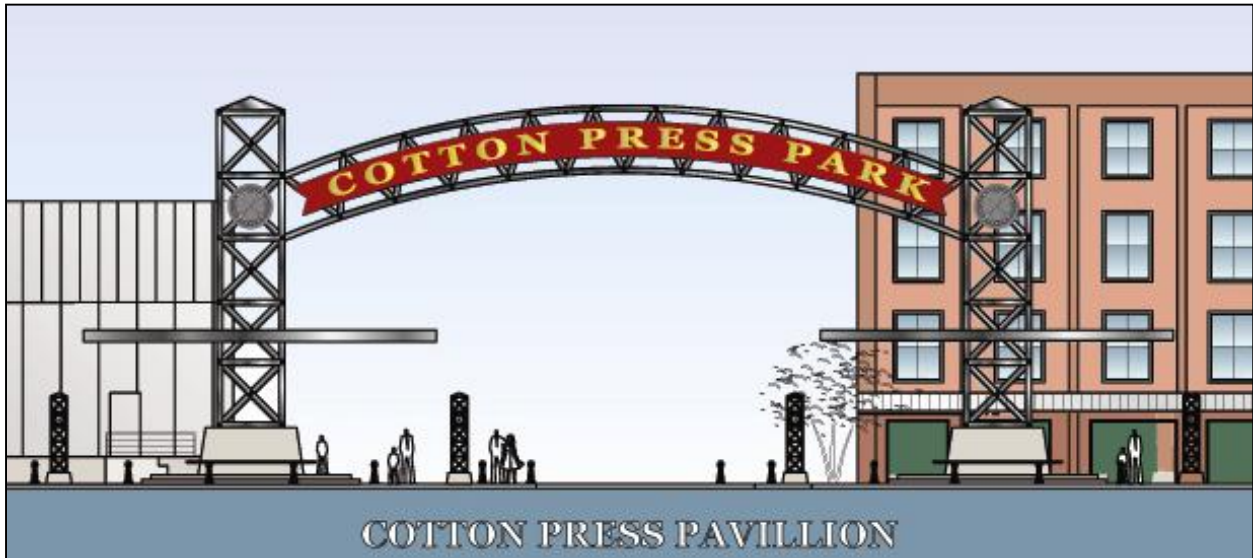


Figure 6.12 Cotton Press Pavilion elevation.

- Nearby warehouse can be bought and developed by the school to expand and promote neighborhood involvement with the school and in the arts by creating a conference center, or cultural museum and art gallery (Figure 6.13).



Figure 6.13 Conference center elevation.

- To follow this idea, the new market will be reminiscent of the warehouses served by the railroad (Figure 6.14).
- Gazebo - railroad/industrial materials.





Figure 6.14 Press Street Market elevation.

### Art and Sculpture

The community has historically been recognized as a source of talented artisans and craftsmen. Therefore art and sculpture play a significant role in the park design. Artwork and sculpture will be placed throughout the park to create interesting views with cultural significance. These elements are meant to provide color to soften the intrusiveness of the existing warehouse structures on the limited park space. Art pieces will reflect the long colorful history of the area, creating a sense of community. This may be accomplished by the following:

- Art and sculpture garden along Press Street for presenting work of community artisans.
- Mural on existing warehouse depicting the earlier days warehouse trade (Figure 6.15).



Figure 6.15 Painting by Xavier Gonzales.

- Mural on existing warehouse wall depicting the clearing of cypress trees to provide land and lumber for New Orleans. To create depth for this image, a grove of cypress trees will be planted in front of the mural (Figure 6.16).

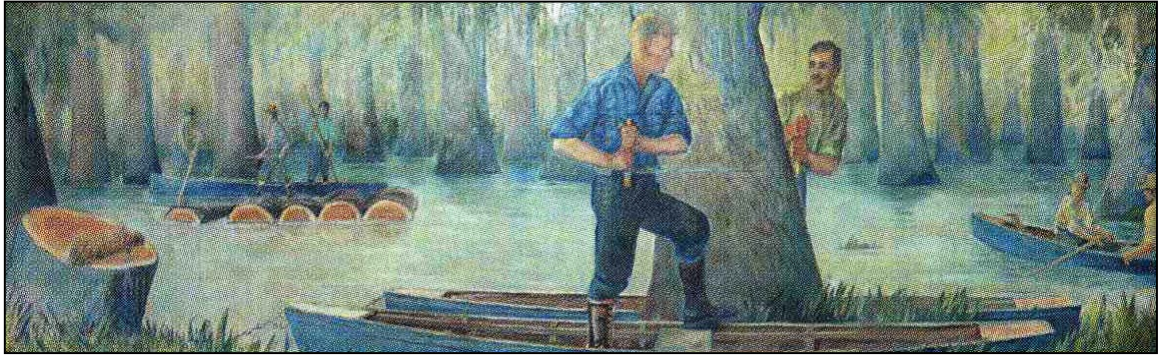


Figure 6.16 Painting by Datus Myers.

- A floodwall mural to create a distant perspective of the 19<sup>th</sup> century riverfront industrial scene (Figure 6.17).

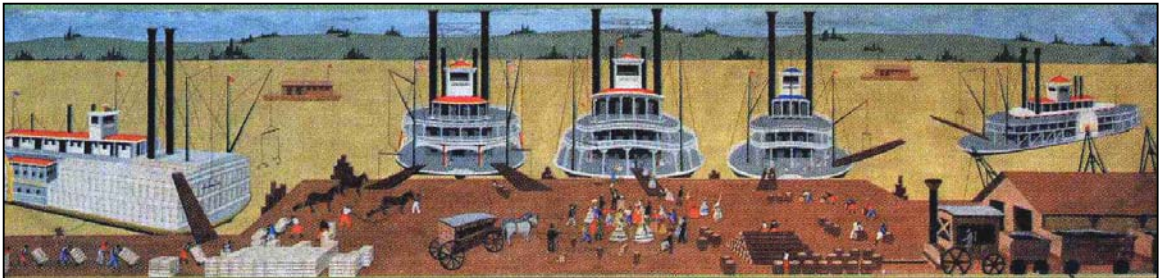


Figure 6.17 Painting by Stuart Purser.

- Interior walls of the market will be decorated with murals reflecting the history of plantation life that once existed in the area (Figure 6.18). Other elements that will reflect this history include a grid of trees surrounding the market and market courtyard used to symbolize cultivation patterns of plantation agriculture. Tree grate details incorporate the crops that were grown on the plantations such as sugarcane, and cotton.





Figure 6.18 Painting by Xavier Gonzales.

- As semblance of the culture and ethnic diversity of the area, “culture gumbo” in a water feature created by local artists to create interest in the market courtyard. This consists of a boiling pot filled with colorful personalities that existed and still exist with in the community. Figure facial expressions reveal joy and comfort of familiarity with one another. Air pumps create a boiling effect and water spills over the rim of the pot. (Figure 6.19).



Figure 6.19 Sketch by author.



## **Landscape**

The site has evolved through the years. From Indian traversed alluvial river valley, to plantation agriculture, and on to industrial use. This design incorporated features from the past into the landscape. These include:

- Buffering recreation areas from railroad tracks with berms and naturalistic plantings of trees.
- Landscape that reflects the indigenous flora of area before settlement. As a naturalistic transition between community and park. Landscape to provide buffers between park and neighborhood.
- Primary passive park space located along a narrow green band along the west side of Press Street, Press Street serving as a buffer between children's recreational area and railroad.
- Modified alley of live oaks along Press Street. Oak alleys are typical of many streets within the city
- Walking paths to articulate the ebb and flow of the Mississippi River and organic forms of the riverbank. These ribbons of meandering pathways will provide seating.

## **Recreation**

An important element in influencing the success of the park is offering a variety of recreational spaces.

- Large organically shaped spaces to accommodate active recreation. These spaces are enveloped by naturalistic buffer zones such as Frisbee. Use is at one's own discretion and risk. Area for active sports with broad participant base, such as volleyball.

- Children's play area located along narrow green space on the western side of the park.

Other amenities that were in the initial program list produced by the residents were:

- A dog run has been placed in association with the active recreation areas. Surrounded by an ornamental wrought iron picket fence with several access gates.

## **CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION**

This project set out to accomplish several goals. First, to develop new design ideas for the linear park proposed for the Press Street railroad corridor. These ideas were offered with hopes that they would encourage the community and agencies to continue their efforts in acquiring the corridor.

In the organization and development of this project, the objective was not to criticize CUPA's plan, but instead to develop new ideas around their basic design to demonstrate the importance of professional design development in gaining the appropriate interest, whether politically or publicly. In trying to obtain funding for the development of the project, the design itself must be visually and artistically stimulating in order to succeed.

Throughout this paper, it has been demonstrated that the Press Street railroad corridor possesses the outstanding potential for being the setting where some of the history of Marigny, Bywater and Press Street could be realized. It is this area that the community and its leaders should continue to direct their lobbying efforts.

“Urban greenspace provides a range of tangible benefits, such as providing opportunities for recreation, reducing crime and fostering cohesive neighborhoods, attracting businesses, and stabilizing property values” (The Trust for Public Land). A park can become a unifying space that provides a common ground and reflects an area's history. A space that promotes community ownership, a place where residents can feel safe, and one that commemorates its past as well as its future. Most of all, a park can be a unique place where the residents can find themselves growing closer to their community and their neighbors.

No one can truly predict what type of design elements will make a park successful. However, this project does offer creative ideas that could be used to improve that possibility.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Breaux, James, et al. "On the Waterfront: A Plan to Revitalize Bywater and the St. Claude Corridor." College of Urban and Public Affairs, University of New Orleans, 1999.
- Bywater Neighborhood Association. "Bywater History." Viewed 13.Feb 2002. Last modified 21.Jan 2003 <<http://bywater.org/bwhist2.htm>>.
- Bywater Neighborhood Association. "Bywater Name." Viewed 13.Feb 2002. Last modified 4.Feb 2003 <<http://bywater.org/bwhist2.htm>>.
- Bywater Neighborhood Association. "Bywater Maps." Viewed 16.July 2001 <<http://bywater.org/bwhist2.htm>>.
- Cangelosi, Robert J., AIA. "From Plantation to Faubourg." 1993.
- Carter, Hodding, ed. *The Past As Prelude: New Orleans 1718-1968*. New Orleans, 1968.
- Chase, John C.. Frenchmen Desire Goodchildren and Other Streets of New Orleans...and Other Streets of New Orleans. Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 2001.
- College of Urban and Public Affairs, University of New Orleans. "Parkway Partners." Viewed 17.July 2001. Last modified 11.Aug 1999 <<http://uno.edu/~cupa/LUTAC/parkpar.htm>>.
- Du Pratz, Antoine Simon Le Page. *The History of Louisiana*. 3 vols. London, 1774.
- Fleming, Ronald Lee, with Jeannie Miller. "Reinventing an Old Ides: A plea for custom street furniture that supports specific places." Landscape Architect July 2004, page 90 - 95.
- Greater New Orleans Community Data Center. "Marigny Neighborhood Snapshot." Viewed 30.July 2004. Last modified 5.Oct 2002 <<http://www.gnocdc.org/orleans/7/21/snapshot.html>>.
- Huber, Leonard V. "New Orleans, A Pictorial History" New York, 1971.
- Ingram Haus. "Faubourg Marigny: That More Bohemian Extension of the French Quarter." Viewed 6.Aug 2001 <<http://sites.netscape.net/ingramhaus/marigny>>.
- Kniffen, Fred B. *Louisiana: Its Land and People*. Baton Rouge, 1968.
- Leavitt, Mel, *A Short Story of New Orleans*. New Orleans, 1982.
- Louisiana Rail Site. Viewed 30.June 2004 <<http://lrs.railspot.com/h/h-ferries.htm>>.

National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior. National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form. 1974.

New Orleans Center for Creative Arts/Riverfront. "NOCCA/Riverfront Student Guide 2001-02." New Orleans, 2001.

New Orleans City Planning Commission, City of New Orleans. "1999 Land Use Plan: Planning District Seven." Viewed 15 July. 2001  
<[http://www.new-orleans.la.us/cnoweb/cpc/1999\\_dist\\_seven.htm](http://www.new-orleans.la.us/cnoweb/cpc/1999_dist_seven.htm)>.

New Orleans 24 7. "Faubourg Marigny/Bywater" Viewed 22.July 2001  
<<http://www.neworleans247.org/neighborhoods/faubourg.htm>>.

North Park University, Chicago. Viewed 30.June 2004  
<<http://campus.northpark.edu/history/WebChron/USA/PlessyFerguson.CP.html>>.

Offbeat: New Orleans' and Louisiana's Music Magazine. Viewed 30.June 2004  
<[http://www.offbeat.com/ninth\\_ward.html](http://www.offbeat.com/ninth_ward.html)>.

Parkway Partners. "Parkway Partners." Viewed 10.Oct 2001  
<<http://www.parkwaypartners.com>>.

Sibley, J. Ashley Jr. *Louisiana's Ancients of Man*. Baton Rouge, 1967.

Street Law & the Supreme Court Historical Society. "Plessy v. Ferguson (1896): Background Summary and Questions." Viewed 30. June 2004  
<<http://www.landmarkcases.org/plessy/background2.html>>.

The Trust for Public Land. "Benefits of Urban Open Space." Viewed 17.July 2001.  
<[http://www.tpl.org/tier3\\_cdl.cfm?content\\_item\\_id=1242&folder\\_id=905](http://www.tpl.org/tier3_cdl.cfm?content_item_id=1242&folder_id=905)>.

The Trust for Public Land. "Community/Neighborhood Revitalization Bibliography 1996." Viewed 17.July 2001 <[http://www.tpl.org/tier2\\_rp2.cfm?folder\\_id=726](http://www.tpl.org/tier2_rp2.cfm?folder_id=726)>.

Tinker, Edward Laroque, *Creole City: Its Past and Its People*. Toronto, 1953.

Tommy Crane, Inc.. "Faubourgs Marigny and New Marigny." Viewed 6.Aug 2001  
<<http://tommycrane.com/html/faubmar.html>>.

Travelape. "Sightseeing: Faubourg Marigny." Viewed 22.July 2001  
<<http://neworleans.travelape.com/attractions/faubourg-marigny>>.

Uskali, Thomas. "Bookstand book review." *Louisiana Cultural Vistas*, Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. Vol. 14, No. 3, Fall 2003, pg.94-95.

Wholehost, New Orleans Business Internet Community. "A Brief Version of the Long History or New Orleans." Viewed 15.Feb 2002 <<http://www.wholehostno.com/nohistory.html>>.

Wikipedia Encyclopedia. Viewed 30.June 2004  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plessy\\_v.\\_Ferguson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plessy_v._Ferguson)>.



## **VITA**

Brian James McBride was born in Dallas, Texas, on July 3, 1968. He was raised in Shreveport, Louisiana, where he graduated from Captain Shreve High School in 1987. Upon graduating from high school, Brian attended Louisiana State University. In 1994, Brian received his Bachelor of Science in ornamental horticulture.

Upon graduating, Brian moved to San Antonio, Texas, where he was employed by ColorSpot, formally known as Lone Star Growers, as a propagation supervisor. In 1996, Brian was hired by Plant Interscapes as a service manager. He worked there until 1998, at which time Brian returned to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to attend Louisiana State University.

Brian enrolled in the School of Landscape Architecture to obtain his Master of Landscape Architecture. His course work was completed in May of 2002 and upon completion, Brian returned to San Antonio, Texas, where he is currently employed as a landscape architect intern by Rehler, Vaughn & Koone, a firm of architects, landscape architects and interior designers. In 2003, Brian became a licensed irrigator in the state of Texas.

Brian married Stephanie Harrison on October 19<sup>th</sup> of 2001. They have one child, Reagan Alexandra, born in June 2003.